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Transmittal # 2

January 12, 2006

TO: Workforce Development Council

FROM: Lois S. Bauer, Administrator *LSB*
Idaho Commission on Aging

SUBJECT: Workforce Recommendations: White House Conference on Aging

ACTION REQUESTED: Workforce Development Council review of the policy recommendations from the White House Conference on Aging which includes the Idaho Commission on Aging's recommendation to create a "Frontier" States' section within the Senior Community Service Employment portion of the Older Americans Act (see Attachment A). The Idaho Commission on Aging requests Workforce Development Council endorsement of the "Frontier" Section recommendation.

BACKGROUND: The White House Conference on Aging is held once every ten years for the purpose of making recommendations to the President and Congress on national aging policies for the future. The legislative mandate for the 2005 White House Conference was to focus on the aging of today and tomorrow in view of the 78 million baby boomers who began to turn 60 on January 1st, 2006. Twelve hundred delegates discussed methods by which the resolutions they selected might be implemented. This included actions that may be taken by business, industry, private and non-profit sectors, as well as families, communities and individuals – and not solely Federal, state and local governments.

WORKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS: The final Conference report (draft) will be submitted to the Governors in March and to Congress in early summer. The following is a summary of the recommendations.

The workforce issues fell within two general categories:

Resolution # 12: Promote Incentives for Older Workers to Continue Working and Improve Employment Training and Retraining Programs to Better Serve Older Workers.

Resolutions # 11: Remove Barriers to the Retention and Hiring of Older Workers, Including Age Discrimination.

For each resolution, implementation strategies were developed that identify specific actions needed to implement the new policy or change. The strategies that received the most support are summarized below.

Resolution # 12A: Promote Incentives for Older Workers to Continue Working.

- Promote flex-time, flex-place and job sharing options.
- Permit pension payments to older workers who want to continue working, but want to cut back on their hours. Encourage phased and flexible retirement options to encourage multiple work options for older workers and businesses.
- Encourage employers to provide employment benefits that assist in retention such as pre-retirement training, eldercare, long-term care insurance, financial planning, leisure and work options for re-careering purposes.
- Provide financial incentives to employers and tax credits to individuals that reward the upgrading of worker skills and abilities.
- Use the technology of ergonomics to provide older worker friendly work environments.
- Adjust the federal minimum wage on an annual basis to compensate for cost-living increases.
- Support policies to correct the pay equity problems encountered by many older workers, with particular attention to older, working women.
- Provide a tax credit for eldercare.

Resolution 12B: Improve Employment Training and Retraining Programs to Better Serve Older Workers.

- Preserve the Senior Community Service Employment Program's vital, historic focus on community service while retaining its dual purpose of community work experience and employment preparation for low-income older persons. Reinstate the eligibility criteria in place prior to the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000. Encourage greater collaboration with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).
- Create a "Frontier" Section within the Senior Community Service Employment Section of the Older Americans Act to address the unique circumstances of older individuals residing in predominantly rural areas and the related challenges in providing substantive work experience and training opportunities. Specifically, the "Frontier" legislation would provide "Frontier" States the *eligibility, flexibility, and authority to use a larger portion of existing grant funds for transportation assistance, distance learning, computer training, occupational/skill training, front-line staff, and other types of participant support (eye glasses, safety boots, assistance with prescriptions, etc.)* (See attached).
- Improve older worker's access to employment and training services funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).
- Attain adequate numbers of healthcare personnel in all professions who are skilled and culturally competent. Support geriatric education and training for all healthcare professionals, paraprofessionals, and direct care workers.

Resolutions # 11: Remove Barriers to the Retention and Hiring of Older Workers, Including Age Discrimination.

- Remove impediments to phased and flexible retirement options to encourage multiple work options for older workers and businesses.
- Remove provisions in pension plans that prevent retirees from working for the companies from which they retired or otherwise penalize older individuals for work beyond retirement.
- Educate employers on the value of older workers, particularly in light of baby boomer retirements, as well as the need to effectively manage age diversity.
- Remove the Employer First Payer provision in Medicare.
- Conduct a regulatory review of the Employment, Retirement and Income Security Act (ERISSA), Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provisions that are impediments to the hiring of older individuals or that discourage continued employment of older workers.
- Assure that older veterans are included in all employer incentives to hire and retain older individuals.
- Use assistive technology to help workers remain in the workforce.
- Raise the cap on earnings for Social Security purposes or eliminate the earnings limitations altogether.
- Implement strategies to prevent ageism/age discrimination from affecting opportunities for older workers.

DRAFT

To: States and Aging Organizations that serve Frontier/Predominantly Rural Areas (State Unit on Aging Directors and SCSEP Directors, and Aging Organizations)

From: Idaho Commission on Aging

Subject: Proposal to Create a Frontier Section within the Senior Community Service Employment portion of the Older Americans Act (Title V of the OAA).

Our purpose in contacting you is to seek your support and input regarding the addition of a Frontier Section to Title V. As you review this draft proposal, please give us feedback on what would be stronger or more appropriate.

As part of the OAA Reauthorization, the Idaho Commission on Aging is proposing that a Frontier Section be created within Title V of the Older Americans Act. The purpose is to address both (1) the unique needs and circumstances of older individuals residing in frontier areas, as well as (2) the challenges in providing substantive work experience and training opportunities (including acknowledgement of the difference in cost and effort to provide services) to urban versus frontier communities.

This proposal does not take any dollars away from any grantee; it gives very rural/frontier areas the ability to use the money we have for low-income seniors in need.

There is no distinction or acknowledgement of urban versus “Frontier” in the current Title V law; the “Frontier” section we propose would provide that focus. The proposal applies different criteria – criteria that fit the needs of frontier/rural areas. Unfortunately, given the existing statute and policies, many of us are returning Title V funds to USDOL while turning away low-income older individuals who need work experience and training.

Specifically, the legislation would:

- Provide more flexibility to use Title V funds for transportation assistance, distance-learning, computer training, occupational/skill training, front-line staff and related types of participant support (books, eye glasses, safety boots and assistance with prescriptions, etc.).
- Provide *eligibility flexibility* to serve older, low-income residents in need of work experience and training.

Examples:

- Allow “Frontier” participants to take an occasional, short-term job and remain eligible for the SCSEP so long as their income at application and recertification is at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty level.
- For purposes of income eligibility, allow Governors of “Frontier” States to amend the guidelines regarding income inclusions and exclusions based on rural economies and areas of high unemployment (i.e. Social Security Income, Unemployment Compensation, Workers Compensation Payments, Disability income).

- Address the cost differential between urban/rural-“Frontier” areas (approximately 25% more) by allowing more flexibility to use SCSEP grant funds for front-line staff (including mileage reimbursement in view of the large distances).
- Adjust performance measures for “Frontier” states in view of rural economies and geography (rural population densities versus urban population densities; areas of high unemployment, etc.)

Characteristics and Definition of “Frontier” Areas

Characteristics:

- “Challenged by distance from and the availability of basic necessities.
- Unique geography and seasonal access.
- Often lack adequate tax base (federally owned land).
- Many transportation issues and challenges.
- Can be areas of multi-governmental jurisdiction.
- The frontier is flexible as is its definition.”

Definition:

“While no commonly agreed-to definition exists, the Western Governor’s Association and the National Rural Health Association have adopted a consensus definition based on a matrix developed by the Frontier Education Center, that includes population density and distance in miles and travel time from a market service area that might include a store, gas stations and a health clinic for example. This matrix is flexible enough to include areas isolated by barriers like mountains, or road less areas, which can make access much harder.”

Please Note: The “Characteristics and Definition of Frontier” were excerpted from an article prepared by Jessica Lowell with funds issued under DHHS. The article summarized a meeting in June, 2005 of seven “Frontier” States (care providers, state officials, Alzheimer Association chapter members, and other community organizations). The purpose was to talk about what makes their job in frontier communities different and share ideas on how to provide both indirect and direct service to clients and families in an environment in which resources are stretching thinner.

The states that participated in the Cheyenne, Wyoming meeting organized by the Technical Assistance Center for AOA’s Alzheimer Disease Demonstration Grants to States National Resource Center are: Alaska, Idaho, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Other states might also benefit from this initiative. If we make a concerted effort with our Congressional representatives and Governors, this is an initiative that can be successful.

Again, our intent is to seek your input and support. As you know, Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act is fast approaching. Please contact Lois Bauer or Melinda Adams at 208-334-3833 or lbauer@aging.idaho.gov or madams@aging.idaho.gov.

Thank you.